Chapter 4.22
ePortfolio and Educational Change in Higher Education in The Netherlands

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ABSTRACT

This chapter describes the important role that the concept of ePortfolio plays in new pedagogical paradigms in The Netherlands. ePortfolio can be seen both as a consequence of and a stimulus for the movement towards student-centered, competence-based learning in Dutch higher education. The authors present lessons learned in ePortfolio implementation, derived from experience from the past five years in the Low Countries, both in local institutional projects and in large-scale national projects. They then describe the cases of their own universities, being Windesheim University for Professional Education and the University of Amsterdam. The chapter ends with conclusions and future developments in the field of ePortfolio in The Netherlands.

INTRODUCTION

In Dutch institutions of higher education, the subject of ePortfolio continues to attract increasing interest. This can be explained partly by the focus on competence-oriented education in universities of professional education, in which the emphasis is placed on student development, but also by academic universities' attention to fostering academic maturity. In the process of educational innovation, the ePortfolio is frequently used as an aid for guiding the learning process or as an assessment tool. It also offers the "Net Generation" students (Aalderink & Veugelers,

2005a) of today the possibility of presenting themselves to various target groups. ePortfolios have the potential to offer clarity and flexibility, for which various stakeholders in education have a particular need, in learning, teaching, and administrative processes.

Much useful experience with the implementation of ePortfolios has been acquired in The Netherlands, through both national projects and initiatives set up by most institutions of higher education. The aim of NL Portfolio[1], established in the spring of 2004, is to combine, share, and expand this experience. NL Portfolio is one of the SURF Foundation's special interest groups. SURF[2] is the Dutch partnership organization for information and communications technology (ICT) in Dutch higher education and research.

LESSONS LEARNED IN ePORTFOLIO IMPLEMENTATION

From the different projects that have been carried out in The Netherlands, different lessons can be learned which are first presented here and will then be illustrated by the cases of Windesheim University of Professional Education and the University of Amsterdam.

Lesson 1: Pedagogy Comes First

In educational change processes using information technology, it is very important to start off from the functional perspective of the learner and the teacher, and to avoid a technology push. In The Netherlands this view is well accepted and is also found to be a key factor in ePortfolio implementation in large-scale, nationwide projects like the E-Folio Project3 and the LMS/DPF (Learning Management System/Digital Portfolio) Project (Kokx, Van de Laar, Veltman-Van Vugt, & Van Veen, 2004). Students in the LMS/DPF Project have reported that the greater amount of self-responsibility in learning with an ePortfolio

was a stimulus for them that evoked them into intrinsic learning in which they were motivated to reflect on and improve their learning processes. One of the conclusions of the E-Folio Project was that the extra value of the use of portfolios lays in learning in authentic situations, creating room for individual development, and investing in coaching and alternative assessment. In the model of Van Tartwijk et al. (2003), the pedagogical field is located in the center of the picture, representing an approach that most Dutch institutes share as common ground: it all starts with the learner. The model also shows elements of the lessons that follow (see Figure 4).

Lesson 2: Clear Definition of Goals and Results is Important

ePortfolio tends to be a container term used for a variety of tools in a wide range of approaches. Traditionally, an ePortfolio refers to a file-sharing system used as a showcase for an individual by which he provides an overview of his achievements in a certain field. Another large-scale project in The Netherlands carried out by the Digital University[4] (Veugelers et al., 2004) has shown that different approaches on ePortfolio implementation can be categorized in a scenario model in three

Figure 1. Scenarios for ePortfolio implementation
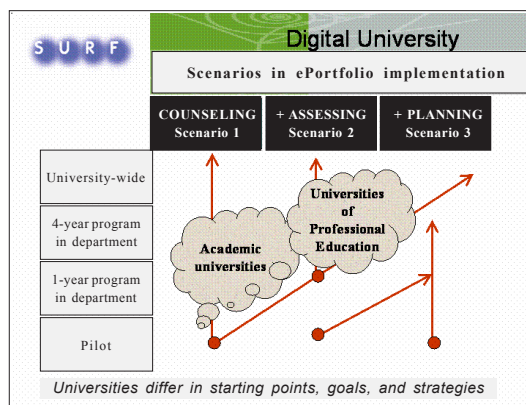
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